

The Archetron - Thomas Tadlock

Thomas Tadlock studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, working with light sculptures and eventually exploring the possibilities of manipulation of television images. He was also influenced by some of Nam June Paik's early works. The Archetron was designed as a commission, and was a unique device. It accepts a black and white broadcast television signal. A triangular pie-shaped section of this image is removed, and then repeated around a symmetrical axis, visually similar to a kaleidoscopic image. There were at least three units in the machine. For each b&w signal coming in, there were knobs for color control over red, green and blue. The color was generated by a mathematical relationships of the black and white signal levels in the incoming signal. For each incoming signal there were three knobs - red, green and blue. By combining the primaries, other colors could be created. There was control over the "amount" or percent of color. The operator could perform with the machine in real time, adjusting colors as the image changes.

The Archetron

"By means of a console with innumerable knobs, switches, dials and other mysterious looking controls, three small TV monitors and a system of mirrors and color filters, Tadlock is able to compose on a TV screen constantly moving and changing colorful kaleidoscopic images. In accomplishing this, Tadlock uses all or part of three separate live broadcasts. It is now possible for this artist (or any other using the Archetron) in effect to create simultaneously works of art on TV screens in countless homes, thus making Nam June Paik's "Silent TV Station" possible. All that is needed is for a broadcasting organization, a closed circuit TV company or cable company to avail itself of this remarkable device. 'In these years I developed devices with patterns, sequences, motion, color, programmed to make the viewer get involved in the unfolding composition, to relax and want more, to develop a new way of seeing. As the requirements of this new art revealed themselves, a need for an instantaneous, flowing, comprehensive device for expressing these images arose. This vacuum was filled by the use of the color television tube as the readout device for the program apparatus'."